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An Inaugural Dissertation
On
Retrocedent Gout,
For the Degree
Of
Doctor of Medicine,
In The
University of Pennsylvania;
By
Hugh Meredith,
Of
Doylestown, Pennsylvania.

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"Ubi irritatio, ibi afflux us".

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Retrocedent Gout.

So intricate is the minute structure of Man, so modified is morbid impression, and so inscrutable are the actions of Vitality, that Medical Science has always been involved in some degree of Hypothetical obscurity. Philosophers, as well as Physicians, have fallen into the labyrinths of speculative Illusion, in their endeavours to unfold the mysteries of Human Physiology.

Various have been the Medical subjects upon which great minds have differed, but one of the most fruitful sources of hypothetical discussion, has been that disease, which, Protean-like in its character, and inveterate in its nature, has equally defied the knowledge of regular Practice, and the hardihood

of ignorant Empiricism. Although many of the most able writers of every age, have thrown the light of their experience, upon this obscure subject, Gout may still be classed among the principal of the Opprobria Medicorum.

The Predisposition to this disease, sometimes inherited with the family estate, sometimes generated by a luxurious course of life, may perhaps prove, in some measure, a restraint on the lawless indulgence of the appetites; and an inducement to a proper moderation.

The different circumstances which may occasion the predisposition, or, when this exists, awaken it into actual disease, have generally the same effect in their action on the system — they

induce debility. Many of them give a predominance ~~to the~~ circulatory function, by maintaining an unnatural excitement of the digestive apparatus. But it is a law of the animal economy, that a continued over-excitement of any system of organs, must weaken the action of other parts, and also eventually debilitate its own functions. This happens in Gout.— The proper equilibrium, in the actions of the various systems of the body, is subverted.— The Stomach, with its kindred organism, is first stimulated then debilitated.— The blood-vessels are loaded with an unusual supply of their vital fluid, and their active power is unequal in different parts of the system.— The

nervous, the muscular, and the lym-
-phatic systems, lose their relative
bearing, and their offices are irregu-
-larly performed.

Gout is usually seated in the smal-
-ler joints of the extremities, but from
the operation of certain causes, the
force of the disease is sometimes
thrown upon one or more of the in-
-ternal organs, occasioning what has
been called Retrocedent Gout, - the
variety upon which I design more
particularly to treat

Location. This Retrocession is some
times to one part, sometimes to an-
-other, influenced in its selection, by the
conditions of the different organs. It
may be seen in the general remarks
with which I have premised this essay;

that the causes of Gout are such as tend in most cases to debilitate the alimentary canal.— In fact, debility of the digestive organs, is the almost invariable attendant upon this disease, and it is owing to their weakened condition, that they most frequently suffer from translated action— Often times, when the bowels are in a state of torpor, there is a determination of blood to the head, as is evidenced by the headacks which occur at this period. If the retrocession take place under these circumstances, the brain, or perhaps one of its investing membranes, will probably become the seat of the disease.— The heart and lungs, are also liable to attacks of this form of Gout.— There are other parts, also,

as the kidneys, the bladder, and the rectum, which sometimes assume the nervous action incident to this metastasis

Causes. Retrocedent Gout very frequently owes its production, to sudden changes of temperature, or to the application of cold with moisture to the surface of the body. Cold applications are often used to remove the pain, and subdue the inflammation of a gouty limb; these sometimes occasion a translation of action. Retrocession to the alimentary canal, is sometimes produced by the irritation of the more drastic purgatives. Stimulating food or drink, is a frequent cause of this irregular attack. A change in the accustomed diet, too suddenly made,

may be followed by a similar effect.

It may not be improper to point out the Nature of the Attacks, which may result from the above mentioned causes. Scudamore remarks, that the character of the attacks, as to inflammation or spasm, depends materially on the temperament of the individual, whether nervous or sanguineous. In the sanguineous, the application of cold in any form, when it induces retrocession, commonly produces inflammatory action; while the same cause in the nervous, is generally only followed by spasm. Scudamore says, that many writers consider the attack as always spasmodic.—

Symptoms.— These vary, according

to the causes, the seat, and the nature of the attack.

As the stomach is the organ most subject to retrocedent gout, the symptoms which arise, denote its condition, and indicate the nature of the affection. Excruciating pain ensues, and when of a spasmodic character, it is lessened by pressure on the abdomen. Nausea and vomiting distress the patient. The stomach appears to be sometimes distended with flatus, by an ejection of which, much relief is afforded. Unless the attack be very severe, the pulse is little affected, but where the spasm continues obstinate, it sinks and the patient becomes exhausted.

When the affection partakes more of

of the inflammatory condition, it resembles strongly some of the phlogosed states of the abdominal viscera. The pain is of a burning character, and more diffused than in the spasmodic variety, and pressure increases it to amagonizing degree. The pulse is full and hard, or small and irritated, showing that the local action, has aroused the general sympathies. There is sickness of the stomach and vomiting, especially when any thing is taken into this organ. The stimulating treatment has the effect of increasing all these symptoms, and materially aggravating the danger of the patient.

When the metastasis takes place to the head, symptoms resembling those

of apoplexy, paralysis, or phrenitis may ensue. The resemblance which these forms of Retrocedent Gout, bear to some affections of the head, is very striking. In all, there is an increased determination of blood to this part, as is evidenced by the beating of the carotids, the flushed face, the intense pain, and the delirious wandering.

The thoracic viscera are sometimes affected; and the disease may be ~~apparent~~ mistaken for Asthma or Angina pectoris, if attention be not paid to the Diathesis, and other circumstances. Professor Chapman, in his lectures on Angina, mentions several cases which have fallen under his notice, wherein

gouty individuals were apparently seized with this affection, all its prominent symptoms being present. In these instances, convinced of the gouty nature of the attacks, his remedial measures were directed accordingly, and his conviction and mode of treatment, were fully justified, by a subsidence of the pectoral distress, and a return of gout to the extremities.

Diagnosis. The great consideration in diagnosis, is the Diathesis, and this is here unequivocally marked.— The metastasis which causes, also sufficiently indicates this anomalous form of Gout.

Prognosis. In forming a prognosis in acute attacks of disease, two circum-

stances require the attention; first, the power of the system to resist, or overcome morbid impressions; and, secondly, the violence of the disease itself. In Retrocedent Gout, we must take into consideration, the age of the patient, the length of time he has been subject to Gout, his course of life, and the vigour of his constitution.— Weighed and opposed to these, must be the exciting causes of the retrocession, and the force of their application, the part or parts which are affected, and the manner and degree in which they are affected, the duration of the affection, and the influence of the remedial treatment. When all these circumstances are carefully considered and

compared, a conclusion may be drawn, as to the favourable or unfavourable issue of the case.

This form of gout requires the immediate attention of the physician, and the promptest remedial measures must be resorted to, especially, if any of those organs, whose functions are most necessary to life, are invaded.

Treatment. I shall first endeavour to point out, the practice, which is more peculiarly applicable to that form of gout, which has been described as spasmodic. This, in its nature, so much resembles Colica, that the practitioner must pursue, the same general course of treatment, as is adopted in that disease, remem-

being, however, the peculiarity of the patient's constitution. One of the most powerful measures for overcoming spasm, is the abstraction of blood. It has accordingly been used with advantage, in this variety of Gout. It must not, however, be blindly resorted to, or directed without a cautious consideration of the circumstances of the case. For the ejection of irritating matters, and ~~[illegible]~~ to allay the sickness of the stomach, emetics may sometimes be usefully employed. The mildest are to be preferred.— The diffusible stimulants, in some cases, should be our first resource. In other instances, they will more properly follow the treatment above detailed. Dr Chapmen directs their administra-

tion, in conjunction with liberal san-
-guineous depletion. In certain states
of the system, these measures are at-
-tended with a similar effect;— they
equalize the irregular and disturbed
circulation.— Opium, wine, brandy, ether,
carbonate of ammonia, camphor, and
musk are the best of the stimu-
-lant class. They may be directed a-
-lone, or variously combined, and
the doses must be proportioned to
the severity of the attack, and the
insensibility of the stomach.— Mild
purgatives are exacted principally
employed, as consecutive measures,
directed to solicit the renewal of
the functions of the intestinal canal.
Gentle enemata are often preferable.
During this course of treatment

emolient fomentations to the abdomen, are productive of the most beneficial consequences.

There is an indication, which must be attended to, in this, and all other cases of Retrocedent Gout. We must endeavour to restore, to its legitimate seat, the translated action. Such means must be resorted to, as will arouse the arterial action in the extremities. Immersion of the feet and legs in warm water, made more stimulating by the addition of common salt, or cayenne pepper, or the application of rubifacients, sinapisms, or epispastics, to the extremities, are the most efficient means for ~~xxxxxxxxxx~~ fulfiling this indication.

Where the attack is inflammatory,

blood-letting is doubtless the most decided remedial measure. Venesection may not, however, be always safely adopted. Local detractions of blood, by cups or leaches, are often more safe and certain measures. Emollient fomentations, or in lieu of them, a large blister to the abdomen, will be found of infinite service. The bowels should be gently evacuated, or at least, irritating fecal accumulations in them, should be prevented. The diet must be light and not stimulating.

When the inebriate has been to the head, threatening apoplexy, or paralysis, or producing delirium, the indications are to divert the action from that part, and recal it to its usual

seat. The first indication is to be accomplished, by general and topical bleeding, purgatives, anodynes, by evaporating lotions to the head, or blisters to the scalp or back of the neck. To fulfil the second we must resort to means already detailed.

Gout, affecting the viscera of the Thorax, simulating Asthma or Angina pectoris, requires the promptest remedial treatment. In those cases before alluded to, related by Dr Chapman, where the symptoms were urgent, and the pulse tolerably vigorous, copious venesection was employed with the most decided advantage. In some instances this was even repeated, before relief was obtained. Where venesection was

prohibited by any circumstances, cups and blisters must be applied to the breast. The bowels should be opened with calomel and jalap or infusion of senna. In Angina pectoris, the European practice is confined exclusively, to antispasmodic medicines. Dr Chapman states, that, in this form at least, these may answer in the incipiency of the paroxysm, or after its force is somewhat subdued by depletion; but its violence is most effectually overcome, by venesection and its auxiliary depletives.

Prophylaxis. This consists in a strict obedience to the dictates of Temperance, and an avoidance of all the exciting causes of the attack. All those irregularities which debilitate the different

organs of the animal economy, must be most heedfully shunned.— The diet should be carefully attended to, and proper exercise regularly observed.

I may now conclude with the consideration of this variety of irregular Gout, though I am sensible it assumes various appearences I have not noticed, and attacks various parts I have not indicated.— I have, however, treated of those cases which most frequently occur, wherein the patient with the most agonizing tortures, is fearfully threatened with immediate dissolution. —